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Community Education...

Building Stronger Communities for Massachusetts

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**Community Education
Policy Paper**

**Massachusetts Board
of Education 1992**

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Community Education...

Building Strong Communities for Massachusetts

A Vision for the Year 2000

The Massachusetts Board of Education envisions that, by the year 2000, mutually supportive relationships will exist within communities for meeting the educational needs of students, families, and the community. Educators and community representatives will be active partners in coordinating educational, health and human service, cultural and recreational programs in ways that help communities and their children to thrive. By strengthening the community, all of the institutions in the community will be strengthened.

The social and fiscal realities of the 1990's will require the broad-based collaboration and cooperation of **Community Education**, which involves all of the organizations and individuals in the community in building a stronger, healthier, more productive citizenry of all ages. **Community Education** also strengthens public involvement in and support for addressing the needs of all people for the greater good of the community.

This Policy Paper affirms the Board's commitment to the principles and strategies of partnership that define **Community Education**.

This Policy Paper is presented in five parts:

- A Definition of Community Education
- Premises of Community Education
- Strategies and Approaches of Community Education
- Community Education at the Local Level
- Board of Education Support for Community Education

Definition of Community Education

Community Education is a “way of doing business” that draws on all of the resources available within a community for the purpose of providing the most effective educational services for residents of that community. It is a total community enterprise that addresses the educational needs of children and adults through partnerships among schools and the community. Community partners may be colleges and universities, businesses, industry, and labor organizations, churches, community and governmental agencies, parents, senior citizens, and others who connect with the schools to strengthen education. These partnerships promote:

- Utilization of the full range of physical, human, and financial resources in the community to facilitate effective and empowering lifelong educational growth by children and adults.
- Strengthening of families to facilitate their support for the education of their children.
- Coordination of health and human services for students and their families.
- Involvement by the community in educational planning and decision making.
- Volunteerism as an organized method of helping students and adults to reach their educational potential.

Community Education... Building Strong Communities

In order to reduce barriers to learning such as poverty, abuse, neglect, malnutrition, and homelessness, educators are collaborating with community agencies and organizations to address the needs of children and their families and strengthen students' and adults' potential for learning and for contributing to their community.

Premises of Community Education

Community Education strategies and practices are based on the following set of core assumptions:

1. Education is a community-wide responsibility and a life long process.
2. Public schools, with their responsibility for serving the community, must take an active role in coordinating community services that strengthen families and the community.
3. Human and educational services are delivered most effectively when the recipients of the services are involved in the design and delivery of these services.
4. The broadest possible spectrum of individuals with a stake in education must be involved in educational decision making and planning.
5. People support policies and institutions that provide them with a voice in decision making.
6. The community is a valuable site for learning and teaching.
7. Stable and lasting partnerships depend on the continued enjoyment of mutual benefits.

Community Education... Building Strong Communities

To strengthen families' involvement in their children's education, school and community partners are working to develop comprehensive approaches to expanding family involvement in their children's schooling. These partnerships promote community, home, and school-based strategies for strengthening school-family ties that facilitate students' achievement, parent education, and family literacy.

Strategies and Approaches of Community Education

The Board of Education encourages state and local education and community leaders to use the strategies of **Community Education** to address critical community challenges. The following sampling of issues, accompanied by some general suggestions, are offered as indicative of ways that **Community Education** can be a tool in strengthening communities.

1. Expand educational opportunities for learners of all ages through partnerships with a diverse range of community agencies. These partnerships enliven the contextual learning experiences of younger and older students, use the community as a classroom that enhances learning, and facilitate transitions from academic and training programs into work settings.
2. Strengthen the human service delivery system in the community by coordinating programs and services which address social, emotional, health, educational, training, creative, and recreational needs of citizens of all ages.
3. Increase involvement of families in the education of their children by reducing barriers to parent and family involvement through comprehensive school and community-based approaches that draw on a range of effective strategies to strengthen families and communities.

Community Education... Building Strong Communities

Business people "adopt" inner city youth at risk of dropping out of school through programs that provide tutoring, summer employment and personal and vocational counseling that enable these young people to experience the success and self esteem that is necessary for their transition into literate, productive adults.

4. Enhance opportunities for academic success by providing services that reduce the health, social, emotional, and human service needs of children and their families which can impede learning.
5. Enrich the curriculum through hands-on, contextual, practical learning experiences that are developed through meaningful relationships with community partners and that provide students with the skills needed for the 21st century.
6. Provide teachers with new opportunities for professional development through partnerships with businesses, higher education, cultural arts organizations, and other resources. Encourage and facilitate the active involvement of teachers in the community as knowledgeable resources and as advocates for children and families.
7. Improve school management and governance through effective school-site decision making that involves teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community representatives in planning and decision making that responds to school and community needs.

**Community Education...
Building Strong
Communities**

High school students participants in training on drug and alcohol abuse prevention that is provided at the school by local social service agency staff. They use their training to serve as peer counselors in their schools and as role models and speakers for groups of students in schools and in the community.

Community Education at the Local Level

The Board of Education encourages school and community leaders to consider the following practices that have proven to be effective means for realizing the benefits of **Community Education**.

1. Promulgate local policy statements that depict the public school and the community as partners in strengthening the community.
2. Provide opportunities for public participation in setting priorities among community needs and concerns.
3. Identify and invite appropriate community and school partners to serve on school and community councils and planning teams.
4. Initiate "compacts" between the schools, human service agencies higher education, cultural organizations, churches, and business, labor and government organizations that outline the educational and societal benefits of building healthy communities.
5. Provide parents/family members with a variety of ways to be involved in their children's education including individual and group involvement in at-home, in-school, and community-based activities; facilitate family literacy through programs that enable parents and children to learn together; and promote informed choice through family information center and family empowerment.
6. Enhance student learning and community responsibility by promoting student involvement in community service and social action activities and projects.
7. Encourage the increased use of public school facilities by community groups and agencies in order to meet the diverse needs of the community.

Board of Education Support for Community Education

Community Education is a local process. Because it is oriented to the particular needs and resources of each community, **Community Education** will take different forms in different communities. Local communities are encouraged to use and consider the **Community Education** strategies and practices that are relevant to their needs and their effective delivery of services. The role of the State Department of Education is to support these local processes and to provide statewide leadership in fostering an awareness of the impact of **Community Education** on strengthening communities and their children. Specifically, the Board recognizes the Department's responsibilities to:

1. Maintain connections with the most progressive national and state developments in the concept and practice of Community Education and disseminate related information to interested local communities.
2. Support and encourage the operation of a statewide Advisory Council on Community Education that will assist the Department of Education in the development of Community Education in Massachusetts and make timely recommendations to the Board on policy and legislative direction.
3. Develop state level compacts with other state agencies that facilitate collaboration by education agencies, colleges and universities, and other human services at the local level in building communities in which children thrive.
4. Place priority on giving discretionary funding to programs that emphasize representative, participatory planning and decision making regarding the utilization of community resources.

Community Education... Building Strong Communities

School administrators and teachers are collaborating with parents, business people, representatives of social service, higher education, cultural, religious, and arts organizations, senior citizens, and others in decision making and planning that is guiding educational reform. These school-community partnerships are identifying educational and community needs and developing responses to these needs.

5. Promote inter-divisional coordination that maximizes the Department's support for Community Education and that eliminates barriers impeding the realization of the full potential of partnerships to strengthen communities.
6. Work with state level associations of educators, citizens, community organizations, cultural arts groups, business and labor leaders, religious groups and relevant others to promote strategies and practices at the local level that build healthy communities.
7. Collaborate with programs in higher education in order to infuse Community Education principles and approaches into the core curriculum and preparation of educators, social service and health care providers, public policy makers, and others who work to strengthen communities.



